

## **Script – Print – No Smell, No Taste**

**For 27 million people COVID-19 has done a number on their senses**

One of the most common symptoms found in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic was the loss of smell and taste.

While many people rebound quickly from the loss of smell (most recover within 30 days), others have not. In fact, according to a recent [study](#) in the BMJ, (the medical journal of the British Medical Association), about 27 million people in the world are experiencing long-term effects of loss of smell or taste.

“There is a subset about 5%, where we’re seeing the loss of smell and taste remaining longer than six months,” says Angela Vezzetti, PA, a physician’s assistant at OSF HealthCare, specializing in otolaryngology (the study of the ear, nose and throat). “Some studies have looked at different gene mutations in patients where they’re seeing certain mutations impact the sense of smell and the recovery rates. There are a lot of studies going on right now to determine why these patients are not recovering their sense of smell and taste. One other study did note that there was a loss of tissue in the olfactory bulb of the brain that could potentially be causing this prolonged sense of loss of smell.”

The study also revealed that women were less likely to regain their sense of smell and taste than men, which Vezzetti attributes to women having a higher perception of smell than men. People who suffer from nasal congestion were also slower to recover from the loss of smell and taste.

The loss of smell has also been shown to have a significant impact when it comes to emotional and psychological well-being, especially among older people. Loss of smell can cause many emotions. It can make people feel disoriented, detached, anxious or worse.

“I don’t think a lot of people really realized the impact of loss of smell and taste, the sense of smell in general, people kind of took for granted to an extent and a lot more people have seen the really importance of smell when it comes to just taste in general,” says Vezzetti. “Without the sense of smell and taste you can have aversions to certain foods, which for elderly people can lead to either a lack of desire to eat, or nutritional deficiencies, even malnutrition, because they’re not getting those vitamins that they need because the food either tastes bad, or they just can’t taste it at all.”

As time goes on, the medical community has developed a better understanding of how COVID-19 impacts the sense of smell and taste. That includes treatment options which have provided relief for some patients.

“The number one protocol that we recommend is something called olfactory or smell retraining, which we recommend patients take some essential oils which are a nice concentrated scent,” says Vezzetti. “There are four of them that we recommend. They are a lemon, clove, eucalyptus and Rose and they smell those scents for maybe 15 seconds a day, once or twice a day and we’ve have seen some patients regain some of that loss of smell or diminished smell, retraining their sense of smell with these essential oils.”

This is just another reminder about the importance of getting the COVID vaccine. Medical experts believe that the vaccine may protect people from losing their sense of smell even if they get infected.

“I think people can be reassured to know that the good majority of patients with loss of smell or taste from COVID do recover either completely or partially,” says Vezzetti. “And there are some things that can be done in the meantime while they're experiencing their symptoms to try to help such as smell retraining, maybe trying intranasal steroid spray to try to relieve some of that inflammation and hopefully bring back those senses. But I think that the fact that the good majority of patients have improved and are improving is a really good thing.”